

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

Meanwhile Kuchik Khan's movement had been entirely dedicated to the overthrow of the existing Iranian government and to radical social change. It was, therefore, not only a sharp manifestation of popular discontent based on traditional Iranian social ills, but also a natural ally for the Soviet troops. A brief outline of its development may be helpful for an understanding of events that occurred after the landing of the Red Army.

KUCHIK KHAN'S REBELLION

As early as 1915 Mirza Kuchik Khan, Ekhsanulla Khan, and a number of other progressively minded middle-class Iranians elaborated a program of reform for the Iranian state at a meeting held in Teheran. The program was directed against the prevailing reactionary system in the country and against the nefarious influence of foreigners in the affairs of Iran. Taking the program very seriously, Kuchik and Ekhsanulla eventually started agitation among the peasantry of Gilan province and by 1917 louncl themselves heading an open rebellion of Jangalis (inhabitants of Gilan, "jungle") against both the government and die British influence in Iran. In the course of that year a revolutionary committee, called *IttiJiad-i-Islam* ("Unity of Islam"), was formed by them under the slogan of freedom from foreign influence and the independence of Iran under the banner of Islam. Headed by Mirza Kuchik Khan, it was composed of Ekhsanulla Khan and a few other men, all of whom were either merchants or petty landed gentry. Their program was, above everything, nationalistic; Ekhsanulla Khan represented the most radical tendency, inclining toward socialism. The committee engaged as instructors of

its armed forces a number of German and Turkish officers, among whom von Pachen acted as a close military adviser to Kuchik Khan. These Germans and Turks had come from Kermanshah. With Kuchik's forces were also some Austrians who had escaped from Russian prisoner-of-war camps at Baku and in Transcaspia. The Russian November Revolution added to the impetus of the Jangali movement, and Ekhsanulla Khan insisted that the element of class struggle should be stressed. The year 1918 was passed in strengthening Kuchik's hold on Gilan and in intensified agitation among the local population. A newspaper, *Jangal*, was printed as the organ